

How to Decide You're Ready to Get Married

by Wordwielder

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Summary: It all starts with a question over breakfast...

1. A Flower Makes Hiccup's Choice

Hey guys! My first fanfic, so bear with any mistakes. This site's less confusing when you're just reading, not writing...

Disclaimer: Oh, yes, I own How To Train Your Dragon. i'm Dreamworks just aimlessly writing fanfic. Pshhh, not!

Hiccup reclined against the black wall of Toothless' side, absently scratching behind his ears. Toothless closed his cat-like green eyes and purred.

"Hey, buddy."

The eyes snapped open.

"I've been thinking about Astridâ€"" Toothless smacked his tail impatiently. Hiccup grinned ruefully. "Yeah, yeah, I know I never shut up about her. But seriously, this time I'm not raving about how her eyes are the color of sky over mountains or how graceful she is when she fightsâ€|" Toothless, recognizing the approach of a daydream, nipped his human's arm lightly. Hiccup blinked, shaking his auburn hair in the air. "Anyway. This is important this time, bud."

Toothless moved like a flash of lightening, sitting up so abruptly he knocked Hiccup off balance. The dragon looked him in alarm. Hiccup tried to disguise his laugh as cough; Toothless growled. Quit and just tell me. _"Calm downâ€|I justâ€"well, Dad said something at breakfast today while you were outsideâ€|"

Toothless's eyes narrowed.

"Yeah, I thought it was weird too!"

* * *

><p>"Hiccup," Stoick the Vast said seriously; the action accompanying his words was incongruent as he wiped biscuit crumbs out of his beard.</p>

Hiccup promptly dropped his fork in surprise. Admittedly, he and his dad still had a lot to learn about each other. But Hiccup knew after sixteen years of awkward breakfasts together that an earthquake wouldn't interrupt his meal, much less conversation. And he had just initiated it? Immediately, the boy started to panic. Toothless had been off somewhere when he woke up this morning and wasn't back yet, which was unusual, but Hiccup didn't mind him having a little "me" time. So he hadn't worried. Had his dad kicked the Night Fury out? Renounced the Dragon Peace? Did his son shame him again: small, weak, and now crippled? Hiccup's eyes settled grimly on the metal prosthesis. That was it. He knew this utopia of having an actual relationship with his father and being respected by his former tormentors couldn't last. It was just a prolonged dream.

"Y-yeah, Dad?" He mentally started to take stock of what he and Toothless would need to survive. Notebooks, charcoal, extra leather—how would they get food? Could Toothless hunt? Astrid. Oh, no. This was it with Astrid too. She was too good to be exiled for associating with an outcast. Maybe he and Toothless could go somewhere warm, by the sea, fly farther they ever could before!

His dad cleared his throat. The noise grinded against Hiccup's raw nerves. _The pausing is great, Dad! It only adds fun to this situation! —"Hiccup, what are your intentions with Astrid Hofferson?"

"Dad, wait, pl—" the boy stopped his desperate plea mid-breath. "What? My intentions?" Hiccup stared at him. "What do you mean?"

His dad chuckled. "Son, I might not be a young buck anymore, but I'm no' soft in the head. She's over here mos' every day to 'ask you something', you became hot-cheeked and even _more _stumbly around her!"

"Stumbly is not a word."

"she kissed you in front of the entire village!"

"Not the entire village," Hiccup said lamely.

Stoick smiled; it still seemed a little strange to Hiccup to have his father smiling at him. "Ach, the way you act around her! .reminds me how I was around your mother."

"Really?"

"To all the rest of the village, I was this mighty young warrior. But around her!" he shook his head with nostalgic disdain. "Fallin' over, blushin', stutterin'. Made excuses to talk to her every chance

I got. Finally she flat-out asked me what I meant for us."

Hiccup involuntarily leaned forward. "What did you say?"

"I proposed."

Odin help me, Hiccup thought.

Stoick took a massive bite of egg, swallowed and fixed Hiccup with an intimidating gaze. "Hiccup, I'll ask you again. What are your intentions about Astrid Hofferson?"

Hiccup pondered the enormity of the answer to that question. He was not one to not think things through. He picked up his goblet and sipped, swallowed. He answered slowly, simply. "I'm in love with her."

It was the right answer, he knew, the truth.

Stoick's eyes brightened. "A wedding, then?"

Hiccup fell out of his chair.

* * *

><p>"So that's when you came roaring back in," Hiccup finished. "Freaking out, of course, once you heard Dad yell." Toothless bared his teeth. The teen patted his back fondly. "I know bud. I worry about you too. I always feel sort of jumpy when you're not with me." He turned to look earnestly at Toothless, green eyes connecting with green eyes. "So what do you think? You think if Iâ€|propose, she'd said yes? Or punch my face?"<p>

The dragon's ears flattened against his head. Hiccup could read that: _Mine!_ "We'd still ride every day," Hiccup promised. Toothless rumbled. "Okay, twice a day." Toothless' ears raised some. "You'd still live with me, eat with meâ€|we'll see about the sleeping-in-the-same-bed-thingâ€|can't imagine Astrid likingâ€"" Toothless roared; Hiccup sighed. "Okay, okay, I'd bring her around. I justâ€|I don't want to ask to only get shot down. It's been so long, is she expecting me toâ€"? He spotted a flower swaying in the winds of the nightâ€|.an astrid. Of course. He eyed the petals thoughtfully.

"You never tell anyone this," Hiccup said threateningly to Toothless, who snorted at him. Hiccup inhaled and yanked off the first petal. "She loves meâ€|she loves me notâ€|she loves meâ€| she loves me notâ€|"

The last petal.

"She loves me!" he whooped. Toothless rolled his eyes at his friend's jubilation. _Well, duh, _he said with a puff of air. He could only take so much of that goofy grin on Hiccup's face; he lightly slapped the boy's shoulder with his paw. Hiccup chuckled. "Don't get all jealous. I love you too, bud."

She better be willing to share, Toothless thought menacingly. But Hiccup wouldn't forget him. They were too closely tied; bonded more together than he was with his only kin of the sky. Hiccup was _his_

boy.

Toothless smiled, comforted, and laid his head in the lap of his boy. "Well, I guess _you're _on board. Question isâ€|" he twirled the petal-less flower in his fingers, "â€|is she?"

Love it? Hate it? Chapter 2 coming up either way!

2. I'm Going To Screw This Up

Aannnnnddd I'm back! So we last left Hiccup terrified but ready to propose (and Toothless irritated). Let's see how this goes! I would call this chapter K+ for one swear.

Hiccup knew when Astrid rode out on her Deadly Nadder Felma. Most days he'd join her, swooping down from overhead and laughing into Toothless's neck at the bewildered surprise on her face as she wondered how she hadn't heard them coming. Sometimes would they'd clank the saddle, whip in and out of her peripheral vision, call her name softly enough to convince her she was imagining it, and abruptly soar in front of her after nearly an hour. They tried to be imaginative in ways to astonish her, never do the same thing two days in a row.

On their less mischievous days, he and Toothless just liked to show off. They'd do all their amazing moves no one in Berk could come close to mirroring, smirking into the wind as Astrid tried to copy themâ€|. and usually they'd have to catch her after she fell off in the attempt. Other days, they'd race. Sometimes they let them winâ€| just as long as they never got cocky and thought that they actually were faster.

But some days, they would just cruise, side-by-side, silent except for gentle smiles and glowing eyes exchanged between riders. Those days might in fact be his favorite. Once they landed, he could just wrap his bony arms around her, and if he was brave enough, kiss her, and she'd never push him away.

But today he wouldn't be soaring through the pink clouds with her. He was doing something much scarier than a triple upside down flip.

"U-u-umm," he said to the woman yanking herbs from the earth. "Hi, Mrs. Hofferson. Need any help?"

Inga Hofferson stood up. "Ach, Astrid's boy. Hiccup."

"Yes, yes, that is in fact my name," Hiccup said agreeably. "Isn't that a lovely, er, helmet."

"What do ya wan'?" Inga asked straightforwardly. "Why aren't you chasing my girl around the skies like a lark?"

"She mentioned that. Great. Augh, umâ€|I wanted to speak with you and your husband."

Inga's eyes twinkled. "Saw this coming, we did. Everyone did, 'cept that daughter of mine. I'll fetch 'im. URGH!" She bellowed. "THE BOY WANTS YA!"

Urgh Hofferson trudged up the hill. "Ya?"

Hiccup abruptly couldn't breathe, looking at this massive man whose daughter he was in love with. "Uh, hi, see, sir, I, um, want to, um..." _Stop saying um!_ He screeched at himself.

At that exact moment, his bad leg buckled. He grabbed Inga's shoulder to avoid falling, wishing he hadn't sent Toothless off. (He'd thought that if they rejected his proposal and insulted him in any way, Toothless might set fire to their house, and then they REALLY wouldn't like him.) "Sorry," he gasped. "When I stand up too longâ€|can happenâ€|" he slowly unclenched the fist holding desperately to Inga's dress and reluctantly straightened, flashing his most winning smile. "So. I sort ofâ€|well, more than sort ofâ€|I _do _â€| '''llmakeherhappypleasesir?"

Urgh said gruffly, "About time you asked." He clapped Hiccup's back in almost fatherly way. "Ask _her _now." He laughed, pointing; Hiccup's spine felt distinctly like jelly as his dream girl approached.

* * *

><p>Astrid bounded up, cheeks wind-reddened. "Hiccup! What are you doing here? I thought you guys were just being smart today, but you never showed."</p>

Hiccup shifted. "Oh, we just thought you might want some dragon-rider bonding time. I mean, me and Toothless hang out just us all the time."

Astrid rolled her eyes. "I know. I fell like I have to pre-schedule with Toothless before we do anything or he'll kidnap you back. Literally."

"That only happened onceâ€|"

Astrid huffed.

He chuckled. "He's just a little overprotective."

Astrid raised her eyebrows. "Okay, a lot," he admitted. "But tell you what. How about a little Hiccup-Astrid bonding time? Right now?" Astrid looked to her parents, who nodded. Hiccup gestured towards the forest, and off they jaunted. Well, one jaunted; the other limped with spirit.

Inga and Urgh watched them go. "He's crazy about her," Urgh observed.

Inga hmmed. "Good; she's crazy about him."

* * *

><p>Astrid felt Hiccup's eyes on her and met his gaze. "What?" He started. "Nothing. Justâ€|nothing." He ducked his head. "How's Felma?" Astrid was not convinced, but she went with the subject change. "Good. Still can't get let her anywhere near water because of the reflection thing. I don't understand why she's so vain! She spent

more time preening yesterday than I have in my entire life." Hiccup's eyes lit with the fire Astrid loved; he knew dragons. He was ~~the best~~ at them. She understood; to him, dragons were like her fighting. "That's what people need to realize; they're not just a big flying mule. They've each got a unique personality, a history." His face glowed, and she knew he was remembering taming Toothless. She knew pieces of that story, and she was curious about the rest of it; yet, it felt like invading his privacy to ask outright. She wished she was more patient, for the millionth time. It actually had been an obstacle when she was training Felma. Hiccup kept reminding her it took time to gain their trust, to understand their motions, to move as one. He insisted that's why he was so much more skilled with Toothless; but Astrid didn't think so. He and Toothless had been connected from the beginning by one thing:

They were the only one of their kind.

Hiccup's metal foot clunked against a rock; Astrid suddenly wondered where they were going. She observed the mossy boulders, the leafy ground, the stretching pines, and concluded: they were in ~~a~~ a section of the forest. She mentally groaned. She turned to Hiccup to ask, surprised to see his eyes cast upwards and his hands clasped reverently. His lips flowed with soundless words.

"Hiccup?" She asked tentatively. He smiled absentmindedly.

"Hm?"

"What were you doing just now?"

Hiccup rubbed the back of his neck, running the other hand over his hair in a familiar embarrassed gesture. "Um, nothing, really."

Astrid punched his arm. "OW! Okay! I was... thanking the Gods for all of ~~it~~ this," he gestured.

"You just gestured to all of me," Astrid teased.

"Exactly," Hiccup smiled his gentle smile, and wrapped his fingers around her wrist. "All of you." Her heart sang.

"Hey." He pulled her to a stop. "Trust me a second, okay?" He carefully laid a hand over her eyes.

"I trust you, I just don't trust the ground ~~I'm~~ going to fall!"

"No, you won't. I won't let you." She liked how he said that, like she was something precious that needed protection. Of course she DIDN'T, but still. It's nice to be appreciated.

"Okay, step down. Slowly" She jumped, stumbling; Hiccup seized her waist and yanked her back. "Careful!" He admonished, readjusting her. She tried to ignore how her pulse sped at his touch; she tried to pretend she didn't care if he ever touched her again.

Hiccup's voice sounded sturdy and reassuring, dependable. "Step down~~step~~ another step~~okay~~, keep going~~stop!~~"

He peeled his hands from over her eyes. She blinked and let her sight

readjust to the dim of the evening, and she recognized the place: what she thought of as Toothless's clearing, by the lake. "This is whereâ€" "

He finished the sentence: "The first place you saw me as something more than a professional screw-up."

"The first place I could understand you," she corrected.

He tilted her chin up. "The first place you saw _me._" There was a strange intensity on his face, a strength of emotion. Their eyes locked for a second that felt a thousand times more than that before Hiccup sat heavily on a boulder. He patted the spot beside him. She sat as carefully as she could, trying to avoid jiggling his prosthesis. Hiccup watched her comb her bangs behind her ears, his eyes misting with memory. "You know I've had a crush on you since I was eight?"

_Great start Haddock! Way to sound like a stalker. _

Astrid blinked.

"Take that as a no, huh?" He laughed nervously. "You never noticed me. Well, you _noticed _me, just not in a desirable way. I mean, I was pretty noticeable. _Am_ pretty noticeable." He raised his metal foot with a sardonic smile.

Astrid thought back. Hiccup had always acted different around her than the other boys. They'd compliment her fighting skills, tell her she was pretty, and seemed to think she would fall over with adoration. As if. Eventually they got the message she wasn't interested. (Except for Snoutlout, who persisted for years afterward. He had only recently eased up after Hiccup had a talk with him that must have involved death threats; not only was he leaving Astrid alone, he was finally treating Hiccup with respect. Astrid would have loved to know what exactly Hiccup said, but he denied having ever done anything at all.) Hiccup had been awkward, nervous, very rarely talking to her. When he did, it was usually a soft, "Hi, Astrid," or asking if she needed any help carrying her thingsâ€"his attempt at chivalry, she realized now, though then she had viewed it as an insult. She had laughed at him. She had been so cruel to him.

Sometimes, she saw him watching her; if she met his eyes he dropped whatever he was holding and blush.

He'd always been there waiting.

And she had never noticed.

She felt an overwhelming urge to touch him, to prove how she felt. _I'm sorry, Hiccup. I was an idiot._ She slid up the rock to put her head on his shoulder. "I never knew," she whispered, and somehow it felt like she was apologizing even though the truth of those words stung even more.

"I still don't get it." He looked directly to her. "What can I offer you? You could have anyone in the village, andâ€|this?"

"You just gestured to all of you."

"Yep, all of me." He brushed his hair out of his eyes; the color always made her think of the leaves spiraling to meet the ground in October. "I mean, you can easily beat me up!"

"Hey, that's a benefit," she joked.

"I can't kill anything larger than a rabbit!"

"The Green Death was larger than a rabbit!"

"That was all Toothless."

"Not all, who was steering?"

"I can't fight, I can barely walk!"

"How many times do I have to say I don't care about that?" she said fiercely.

"I just like hearing it," he said simply. "Just humor me. Why me?"

"Thor, you are AGGRAVATING!"

"_Great _start."

"Because!" She wanted to stamp her foot like a child throwing a hissy fit. Why couldn't he see how amazing he was? He was the one who could get anyone in the village. Literally, anyone. The parents of three-year-olds hoped they could wrangle a betrothal to their daughter. "Because. You're smart, you're creative, you make me laugh, you're so damn adorable!"

"Whoa, what? Can you repeat that last one?"

"You're tougher than all of us!"

He kissed her.

"And because I like when you do that," she finished breathlessly. "Did you bring me down here just to ask me that?" she demanded.

"No. But I did bring you here to ask you something." His pupils dilated and his eyes widened; Astrid was reminded of a rabbit hiding from a hunter. "Um."

"That's what you wanted to ask?"

"No," oh, man. I'm going to screw this up. Okay. Okay," He sucked in a breath. "Astrid, Astrid Hofferson, I sort of| okay, really| I love you."

"What?"

"I love you." Those words, so simple, so right, once he yanked them out of his babbling mouth.

"You do?"

"Of course. Soâ€| do youâ€|love me too?"

She flung herself into his arms. "Duh! For someone so smart, you're really oblivious."

"Well, I wasn't sure, with all the hittingâ€|"

She swatted his arm again for good measure. "So that's what you wanted to ask me?"

"Well, there were more like two questions."

"And the second isâ€|?"

Hiccup swallowed. Dad did it. You can too, he reminded himself. "Astrid, Iâ€"will youâ€"" She started to interrupt; she knew. Whew. He was out of this one.

Hold up. Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the III was almost nothing like other Vikings, but they shared one thing: they both had stubbornness issues. He had set out to propose to Astrid Hofferson, and he was going to do it if it killed him!

"Shhh," he said, laying a finger on her lips. He pulled form the pocket of his tunic a little wooden box. Remembering something he'd read once, he sank to one knee. He unlatched the box, exposing its contents, and said clearly, "Astrid, will you marry me?"

"Well, duh," she said again, softly, tenderly. Her eyes were like two tide pools glinting with midday sun. Hiccup carefully wrapped his fingers around the ring and slid it on her hand. She studied it. "I've never seen anything like this before. Where did you get it?"

Hiccup shrugged, gesturing modestly with his hand. "Technically, I'm still Gobber's apprentice."

She gaped at him. "You made this?"

He nodded. "I finished it up today. Wasn't hard. See, these red stones are garnets; you can find them in a lot of the rocks out here, you just have to chip them out. The band's made of a combination of silver and steel, so it's bright but won't bend. The center stone is actually a dragon scale." He grinned roguishly. "I had to sneak into Snoutlout's stables with some dragon nip so I could scrape off a Monstrous Nightmare scale. Once I had the materials, I just had to forge the ringâ€|some metal, some tongs, making sure my foot doesn't get too close to the fireâ€|the hard part was the runes." He pointed: "Bottom center of the inner band." She took it off cautiously and peered into the band. In the neatest runes Hiccup could manage to carve with a needle into molten metal, it said it all in one word:

Always.

"Hiccup," Astrid murmured. "You always manage to surprise me."

"Is that a good thing?"

"Excellent," she whispered, and kissed him.

The growl from nearby reminded him Toothless was expecting him back. He was late enough Toothless had left the house to wait for him, but not late enough for him to take him back by force. Toothless was prowling close, but not enough to invade Hiccup's privacy. Wise dragon. Hiccup grudgingly moved from Astrid's mouth and said, "So, I've got one more surprise."

"Yeah?"

"Right afterâ€œ" He pointed to his leg. "My dad thought he'd keep Toothless outsideâ€œ|then downstairsâ€œ|then in my roomâ€œ|well, none of that exactly worked out. Eventually, he ended up in my bed."

Astrid stared. "You share a bed?"

A sharp snarl shook the trees.

Hiccup continued, "And he would like you to knowâ€œ"

Toothless bounded into the clearing, wrapping his tail protectively around Hiccup. He glared at Astrid. "â€œthat he's not going anywhere."

Astrid folded her arms. "I am NOT sleeping in the same bed as your pet dragon!"

Toothless roared.

"He is _not _a pet!" Hiccup protested like she had just called him a girl.

"Okay, your _domesticated_ dragon." She looked straight into Toothless's eyes. "Not. Happening."

Toothless pounced, ignoring Hiccup's yelling, and landing on Astrid's chest. He bent his face low over hers and growled.

"Oh, _fine_," she huffed. "Useless reptile."

Toothless bared his teeth.

"What, only Hiccup can call you that?"

Toothless fixed his eye on hers. "Yes," Hiccup translated. "Come on Toothless, you've made your point." The Night Fury reluctantly let her up. A wide, stupid, happy smile spread across Hiccup's face as he patted Toothless's side. "We wore her down, bud."

She pushed him. "He sleeps on _your _side."

Hiccup and Toothless grinned simultaneously. Hiccup pulled her onto the dragon, and they wordlessly shot into the skies.

So ends this tale :) But I'm open to continuing it, if you request. Anyway, BIG SHOUT OUT to my first 8 reviewers:

Anon: My first reviewer ever :D I hope you enjoy this chapter, and that I kept Astrid true to her character...the same aggressive, independant girl we all love!

XV323: I actually had astrichs, but for some reason they didn't save. Thanks for pointing it out (you'll notice I fixed it) and all your other help :)

Voldyne and Ladylore: I hope you guys think this chapter is as good as the first! The encouragement really helped!

ketbelle: Thanks! I'll be sure to read some of your work soon.

Just Blossom: Thanks for the help and feedback! You'll notice I took your suggestion and used google ;)

WordshakerXD: Oh yes, I WILL make you watch this, and YOU. WILL. LOVE. IT.

**TreepeltA113: Here's the next chapter! Thanks for your support :)
**

..and a special thanks to the readers who put me on their favorite story list: chad-is-the-best, DKing2020, and Renting...

...their story alert list: Bestial moon, and their favorite author list: WordshakerXD.

You're even more amazing if you review again!

3. Preparations: We have Weird Traditions!

And it's here! Sorry that took a while... but all these weird traditions? I did not make them up, Vikings really did them! I spared you the boringness of dowry negotiations :) This one, in my opinion, isn't as well written, but hopefully it's as fun to read as it was to write! Enjoy!

"We should have just eloped," Hiccup muttered.

Astrid grimaced. "I'm not going to disagree, but it's too late now. The wedding's today, for Thor's sake. What have they got_ you doing?"

Hiccup half-laughed. "Well, if you can believe it, it started in a graveyardâ€|"

* * *

><p>1. Hiccup</p>

Looking out at the mass of burly Viking men, Hiccup said, "Um, not that I don't love hanging out with you guys, but why are there this many peopleâ€|in a graveyardâ€|?"

"We're yer attendants," Gobber explained. "Yer advisors and helpers and such for the wedding."

"I have to haveâ€|" he counted the number of men quickly.
"â€|nineteen attendants?"

"Nope," Stoick said. "Not strictly speakin', no. Usually it's about five or six. Mos' the men volunteered fer this one. Canno' imagine why." He beamed.

"Um, thanks?" Hiccup offered to the crowd. "But, really, any reason we're standing on dead people?"

"Because it's manly!" Ack said impatiently. "Real men don't fear their ancestors, boy."

"I think I've proved I'm a real man," Hiccup shot back.

Stoick waved his hand lazily. "Peace, peace. Hiccup, we're in the graveyard because we're going to break into that grave you're standing on."

Hiccup jumped back, horrified. "Um, no. No way. The likelihood of me doing that is about as high as Toothless moving back into the forest."

"Hiccup, you have to! It's essential for the ceremony!"

"I have to dig into a grave to get married?" Hiccup felt like he'd just been slapped with a wet eel. He hated eel.

"Yep!" Gobber answered cheerfully.

Hiccup eyed the forest, calculating his chances of escaping 19 men on his bad leg. His father seemed to read his thoughts. "We'll just drag you back," he threatened.

Hiccup raised an eyebrow. "I'll just yell for Toothless."

Stoick scowled. That overgrown lizard just wouldn't understand tradition. "Okay, fine, you win."

"So we don't have to dig into a grave?" Hiccup said hopefully.

"Oh no, we have to," Stoick reassured. "We'll just do the clean version."

* * *

><p>"So let me get this straight," Hiccup said. "We dug a false grave, you put something in it for me to retrieve, and now I have to dig it out?"</p>

"Exactly," Stoick replied.

"We have weird traditions," Hiccup muttered.

"Jes' go!" The attendants shouted. Stoick dropped an axe into his son's arms; Hiccup staggered under the weight of the weapon. How did Astrid carry one of these things? "I don't even get a shovel?" he asked weakly.

Stoick rolled his eyes. "Too easy." He pushed him to the pseudo-grave. Hiccup tried to swing his axe into the earth; he promptly fell over. The men kindly refrained from laughing. "Um, a little help here?" he called.

"Nope, you're required to do it all by yourself," Hoark the Haggard chuckled.

Hiccup looked hopelessly at the six-foot-deep grave. "I'd order some ale. We're going to be here a while."

Four hours later, when most of the men were mildly intoxicated, and in an alcohol-aided sleep, snoring with the force of earthquakes, a voice broke the air: "I'M DONE!"

Gobber jerked awake. "I'm up! Done, eh? Good job."

Hiccup smiled discreetly. No one needed to know that while they slept he'd snuck off to the forge with the axe and reshaped the blade into a crude shovel. He grabbed a replacement axe and made his way back to the partially-dug grave. Well, it actually took two trips—he couldn't drag both axes at once. He brushed the final layer of earth off the glimmering object buried in the grave and unearthed—what?

"A sword?" His voice squeaked. "I dug four hours for a sword? REALLY? I can forge one of these in an hour! Dad, I am going to—wait. Where is he?"

An imposing figure, swathed in a green, swirling cloak, stepped out of the trees. "I am your ancestor Olar, founder of Berk!"

Hiccup blinked. "Dad, what are you doing?"

"I am Olar, not Dad!"

"Okay, Dad, sure. What brings you back to Berk, Olar?"

"I am here, on the morn of your wedding, to remind you of your proud history and the lineage that makes you royal among Vikings!"

Hiccup resigned himself to a very long conversation.

When 'Olar' finally finished his monologue, Hiccup was about to fall asleep standing up. Seven generations of history. It was worse than Toothless' breath in the mornings. Especially he spoke of the Dragon Wars. Hiccup winced. So many lost souls—on both sides.

"Do you understand?" 'Olar' asked sternly.

Hiccup swayed on his foot, thinking how sore his leg would be later.

"Do you understand?" His father/ ancestor roared.

"What?" Oh, yeah. I'm royal and stuff, my heritage is who I am and who my children will be, the traditions I think are really weird are still around for a reason. Totally got it."

"Good," 'Olar' growled, and he lumbered back into the forest like a bear. Hiccup looked into the crowd of solemn men. "Um, what's up? You guys eat any good food lately?" Ack shrugged. "Some good rabbit."

Stoick bounced up. "Hello, son. How was your audience with our ancestor?"

"Good. Veryâ€|informative. Though you already knew that," Hiccup pointed out.

"I don't know what you speak of," Stoick said with dignity. "_I _was insuring there was an ample amount of bridal ale for the ceremony."

Hiccup paled. "A-are we sure that's a good idea, Dad? Me and ale aren't really good togetherâ€|I mean, last timeâ€|"

Stoick winced. "Son, I'm sure it won't happen again. You're bigger."

"By ten pounds!" Hiccup argued.

"You've got _some _tolerance by now," Stoick said firmly. "Please, Hiccup. For a month after the wedding, you and Astrid must consume the ale together. It's symbolic. It is a _tradition. _If you're really worried, pray to Odin for luck."

"Fine, but if what happened last time happens again, Astrid might not want to marry me anymore."

"Hiccup!"

Hiccup rolled his eyes. "Okay, fine, I'll shut up. What joyous tradition is next?"

* * *

><p>"Bathing?" Hiccup said suspiciously. "Seems tooâ€|easy."</p>

"While you purify yourself of bachelorhood, we attendants will instruct you in the ways of women, marriage, and fatherhood," Gobber clarified.

"There's the catch," Hiccup sighed. "Are you sure the bathhouse can fit all of us?"

Stoick winked. "Fit more women when Astrid was doing her purification."

Hiccup's cheeks burned. "I am not making _my _son do this," he muttered. The words "my son" suddenly made him feel queasy. He was 16! He was not ready to have a family totally dependent on him! Kids? Augh! He was _16!_

"Oh, yes, you will," Stoick grinned. "All part of the experience, my boy."

They let him undress and slip into the steaming water with their eyes cast respectfully upward. Well, this is awkward, Hiccup thought. "So," he said unsteadily, "What do I need to know?"

"Well, for one," Ack said. "Avoid angering your woman as much as

possible. Not to say bend to her every will, that's no' what I mean. Just try to keep her happy."

"You thought I wouldn't?" Hiccup asked, a little offended.

"Oh, we know you will," Bjorn snickered. "You're pretty dedicated to tha', eh? Look at that ring he forged! My Helga had just a plain band."

"I wanted to ask right!" Hiccup defended himself.

"No, it's a good thing," Bjorn said. "You're going in on the righ' foot."

"Let her rearrange the house to her liking once she moves in," Stoick advised. "Lay down what she can't touch before it becomes an issue. I remember with Vallarharmaâ€|"

"Let her know your food preferences quietly so if she ever wants to 'surprise' youâ€|and so she doesn't serve you something yeh hate," Ode added.

"I don' think you'll have any problem pleasing her physically," Gobber said wryly. "I mean, she seems pretty happy kissing on you."

"No one is ever going to let me forget that, are they?" Hiccup groaned. "It was one time!"

"I'll never forget the look on his face when she pulled away," Lars laughed. "More dazed than a cow struck by lightening!"

Hiccup blushed.

"Fatherhood," Stoick grimaced. "Um, someone else cover this."

"Well," Spitlout, Snoutlout's dad, mused. "Yours turned out pretty well, Stoick, I don' know why you're cowering over there."

"Because we didn't really get along until a while ago," Hiccup said.

Spitlout shrugged. "Love your child. Girl or boy. Do your best to show it. Be stern but not cruel. Don' let 'em push ya around neither. You're in charge."

"I don' think we have to worry about fatherhood much, Hiccup's great with younglings," Gobber said. "The ones in dragon training just adore him. Astrella's convinced she's going to marry him. She'll be heartbroken, eh, Hiccup?"

Hiccup splashed water on him.

"Augh! Odin's beard!"

The men kept on advising. Hiccup was actually grateful for this part; he needed to know. He wanted to please Astrid; he wanted to keep her happy; he wanted to be a good dad. He needed all the help he could get.

Eventually, they declared him purified.

He dressed in his wedding tunic, hooked that massive sword to his belt, and tried to ignore the panic asphyxiating him.

"Son," Stoick said, "The wedding is in an hour. I'm going to go tie up some loose ends. You prepare yourself. Practice your vows."

Hiccup, almost without thinking, found himself calling for Toothless and flying to Astrid's house. He needed some sanity.

* * *

><p>"What about you?" Hiccup finished, leaning casually on Toothless's side.<p>

"Well, I didn't have to dig into any gravesâ€|"

"â€|lucky," Hiccup muttered.

"My preparations were awful in a different way."

* * *

><p>2. Astrid<p>

Like Hiccup, Astrid was beleaguered by attendants. Almost every married woman in the village had turned up to guide her from maidenhood to marriage. Ruffnut was hanging around in the edgesâ€|maybe trying to prepare herself.

"Mom!" Astrid cried. "That's my favorite skirt!"

"Honey," Inga said as she tossed Astrid's skirt into the rag pile. "You can't have any of your old clothes. They're maiden clothes. I've made you new ones for when you're married."

"But I like my old clothes," Astrid protested.

Inga tossed a dress her way. "Do you like this?"

Astrid examined the plain, no-frills blue dress. "Yeahâ€|"

"It's one of the ones I've made."

Astrid shut upâ€|until she noticed the women filing out of her room. "What are they doing?"

"They're packing the appropriate things," Inga said.

"The appropriate things?"

"The things that aren't maiden things. The things you'll need as a wife."

Ruffnut poked Astrid's arm, grinning. "Ooh, a wife. You're going to be Mrs. Haddock!"

"Ruffnut, yes, I am. Shut up, I'm nervous enough."

"Astrid, he worships the ground you walk on," Ruffnut snorted. "No need to be nervous."

"Shut up! You're not helping me!"

"Astrid, peace," Inga commanded. "Wait for the purification. All your questions will be answered."

Astrid did a quick head count and gasped. "We can't fit 26 people into the bathhouse!"

"25, silly, Ruffnut can't come," Inga corrected.

"And why not?" Ruffnut said indignantly.

"Because you're not wed, nor a mother, and so you have nothing to contribute."

Ruffnut huffed, but she couldn't argue that unless she produced a child and could prove she'd birthed it. So she gave Astrid a one-armed hug and told her she'd see her at the ceremony.

The women squeezed in the sauna and politely talked amongst themselves while Astrid slipped into the steaming water. "Okay," she breathed in, "I'm ready."

"Honey, for one, you need to curb some of that hitting," her mother said frankly. "Some might not find it proper. And it'll teach your children to hit, which you don't want, because they'll hit you too!"

Brunhilde nodded. "But let's get to children later. Your basic duties are to rise before the rest of the house, prepare breakfast, and spend the day maintaining the house or any children you may have about. Sewing, cleaning, the like. In the evenings, you feed your man a hearty dinner, and the night passes as you wish." She raised her eyebrows. Astrid reddened.

"Let's not terrify her too much," Fryis laughed. "Living with a man is what she _needs _to know."

"Ach!" All the women agreed.

"Keep the house orderly and on schedule."

"Don't bend to his every will, but be peaceable."

"Show your love, and he'll do the same."

"Avoid foods he dislikes; much less fuss."

"Every man likes bread!"

"Keep your prayers strong, my girl, and the better if you pray together. He will lead the family in religion, but you hold together the family."

"Don't let him take too much ale; but I don' see that coming with

yours, he's mild."

"Give him strong children!" There was a ripple of laughter and a hearty murmur of agreement. Phlegma said thoughtfully, "I don't think Hiccup will mind so much whether they're strong or not. Look at him, an' how he turned out! He'll just want 'em healthy."

"You're his compass to guide him. Remember that, my girl," Inga said.

"No pressure," Astrid muttered.

It went on, telling her how to knit and what plants she should plant in their garden and silly, necessary things. She listened, overwhelmed and eager.

Inga called, "Out, Astrid. Into the cool water now." As she spoke, she sprinkled flowers and herbs into the water. She gestured to it, "Encourages fertility. I want grandbabies, now."

Astrid jumped into the cool water and prayed to Frigga, goddess of marriage, for luck. She'd need it.

* * *

><p>"The worse part is yet to come. They're dressing me next," Astrid said darkly. "I'm just wearing this old dress while I dry off."

Hiccup smiled. "I like the missing elbow. I really hope that's what you're wearing to the ceremony." She swatted him.

"No, you look great; you always do," he said.

She kissed his cheek. "You're sweet."

"I still think being forced to dig into a grave is worse than having to throw all your clothes away."

"Whatever. We have weird traditions."

"That's what I said!"

"Hiccup!" Stoick's voice shouted in the distance. "Get off your overgrown lizard! It's time!"

Toothless growled. "He doesn't mean it, buddy," Hiccup promised. He took a deep breath, turning back to Astrid. "I should go. How aboutâ€¦ a kiss for luck?" He was still hesitant with her. It was so cute. How could she refuse?

She kissed him, soft and brief. "I'll see you at the altar," he said, jokingly but with a glow in his eyes, as he climbed onto Toothless. Astrid watched the dark shape of the Night Fury climb into the sky and soar away. It hurt to watch.

She went to go put on her wedding clothes, still feeling like she was in a dream.

**Love? Hate? Something constructive to say? REVIEW REVIEW REVIEW!

The wedding will come faster with more reviews :)**

4. Ceremony: The Traditions Continue

Okay, I'm terrible; I got all involved in Volleyball Wars and used my writer's block as an excuse to not update this. Thank you for being patient! It's the much-awaited ceremony!

Stoick patted his son's shoulder, making him stumble. "Ach, sorry. I forgot."

Hiccup just nodded, forgoing his usual witty comeback; he looked like he'd just stepped back on land for the first time after a long sea voyage.

"Hiccup, I've got somethin' for ye." Stoick carefully unhooked his hammer from his belt. "Carry it to the altar with you. It's a gift of Thor, the hammerâ€"and good luck. It also is a symbol of your dominance in the union."

"That's so sexist!" Hiccup said, horrified.

"What on earth isâ€"? You and your vocabulary, son! Just carry the hammer. Same one I carried on my wedding day, in fact." Hiccup hooked the hammer to his other side, dismayed at the thought that he would probably trip on his way to the altar with so much extra weight. He swallowed. "Dad, when do we start? The waiting really only adds fun to this situation."

"Was that sarcasm?" Stoick asked. Hiccup nodded tightly. "Not much longer now, my boy. Five minutes." Toothless came up and rubbed his head against his rider's neck. Hiccup closed his eyes. "Dad, I'm kind ofâ€|" He sighed. 'Terrified?' Stoick supplied. Hiccup bit his lip. "Yeah, that about sums it up."

"Don' worry. It'll pass. The ceremony's a bit nerve-wrackin', but ye know your vows, and that's the hard part."

"Oh, the _sword handling_ isn't harder?"

"No, that was the easiest paâ€"oh. Right."

"Your confidence is overwhelming, Dad," Hiccup groaned. "I'll probably stab Astrid trying to give her her ring." Toothless made a coughing-hiss noise Hiccup knew was him laughing. "Oh, be quiet," he said. Toothless nudged his arm. _It'll be fine. You'll do fine, _the dragon said with his eyes. Hiccup smiled wanly at him, "Thanks, bud."

"We should go, son," Stoick said gently.

Hiccup paled, suddenly leaning more heavily on Toothless. "A-already?" A very small part of him screamed to climb on the Night Fury and fly. He swallowed. "Okay. Let's go."

Stoick raised his eyebrows. That was easier than he thoughtâ€|

The thud behind him told him Hiccup had just fainted.

He was turning out to take to marriage almost exactly like his dad. But no one needed reminding of _that _incident.

* * *

><p>The attendants filed in front of him in a somber line to the altar in the center of the clearing. Toothless's clearing. Toothless purred in recognition; Hiccup laid a hand on his back, smiling without strain fro the first time all morning. Stoick patted his son's shoulder as he, the final attendant, began his trek to the altar.</p>

Toothless gave Hiccup a _We can do this, no problem,_ look and Hiccup nodded. "Let's go, useless reptile." The dragon smiled a goofy, gummy smile; Hiccup mirrored it. They walked down the aisle side by side. Hiccup channeled the pride of the Night Fury; he kept his walk dignified and his head tilted to the sky.

The Elders assembled at the altar nodded to him as they took their place. "Bridegroom," They announced solemnly to the crowd of Vikings who had gathered for the ceremony. "May Thor grant you luck!" The audience and the elders chanted together. .Hiccup bowed. "_Pokk_," He thanked them.

"Cometh the bride," The gray-haired elder responded.

Hiccup tore his gaze form his boots and then, he saw her.

She had been beautiful when they were toddlers.

She had been beautiful they were eight and he fell for her.

She had been beautiful when she didn't know he existed.

She had been beautiful when she rushed into him outside his house after the Green Death.

She had always been beautiful.

Now, she was ethereal. Hiccup was astonished; this woman, this vision, had be some goddess come to bless him, he couldn't be marrying her, he didn't have that kind of luckâ€|.

But he couldn't deny as she glided to him that this was Astrid. This was his Astrid. His Astrid with her glorious wheat hair unbound and brushing her shoulder blades like eh ahd never seen it, his Astrid shimmering in a draped, shimmering green gown, his Astrid's cheeks glowing as their eyes locked. His Astrid's arms linked with her young nephew Rolf, escorting her down the aisle.

Why had he wanted to put this off?

"Beautiful," he breathed. No; she was radiant.

The bridal crown glistened, garlanding her hair. It was silver, the points ending in elaborate carved crossed and clover leaves, garnished with red and green silk tassels. Crystals gleamed in the light. She held a sword gracefully, the point directed the sky.

She reached the altar. Hiccup couldn't bring himself to look from

her. She was his sun.

"Bride," said the Elder. "May Frigga and Freyja bless you with love, a fruitful union, and heirs of your husband."

"May you be blessed!" The Viking echoed.

May you, Hiccup thought fervently.

Of course, when Hiccup was desperate to kiss her and be done with all this ceremonial nonsense, they started to dictate the terms of dowry and the _mundr _and Odin knew what else. He took her hand, rubbing his thumbs in circles over her skin. He counted her eyelashes and the freckles on her hands. He studied her eyes. He grinned at the guys and Ruffnut, who grinned back. Well, Snoutlout vaguely smiled, but he was half-asleep, and Hiccup didn't blame him. If he was just in the audience and not hyped up on _I'm going to get married today!_ He'd probably be asleep by now.

Every second was another second closer.

Finally the Elder ordered, "Bring the goat."

One of the younger boys from dragon training hurried up with a leashed goat. He delegated the animal to the Elder, who turned back to the couple and the audience. "Today we gather to bless this man and this woman in matrimony. As a gift to the gods, we dedicate this goat in honor. We the Elders give this sacred animal to the couple to care for as dearly as they will each other, and may the gods see you in their favor and bless you for it."

"Thank you, Elder," They replied, almost in exact unison.

"The potion," the Elder requested. Phlegma delivered a bowl, and Hoark handed her a bundle of fir needles. The Elder gestured for the people around her to back away as she placed the potion on the damp earth and dipped the fir needles into the light-colored, thin liquid. She transferred the dripping bundle to another Elder, a fierce looking man. The Elder cleared his throat and with deliberate, skilled movements, swished the bundle downwards and left to right. The potion splattered on Hiccup, Astridâ€"the entire congregation. "Great Ones, bless them with this brew," The Elder prayed.

"Bless them," The others repeated reverently.

The Elder nodded to Hiccup, and he connected his jade eyes with Astrid's color-of-sky-over-mountains ones. He unsheathed his ancestral sword and held it aloft. "As wielded by my forefathers now in Valhalla, I wield now, and give to thee to pass on to our children." He didn't stammer, barely blushed on the word children. This is a victory! Still, a victory whoop would make Astrid kill him for interrupting her.

She took his sword, her face glowing, and recited, "Take this sword I offer to you as a token of my love and solidifying of our union." Hiccup took the sword; Toothless nosed him back up so he wouldn't stagger, fall, and humiliate himself from the weight. He made a mental note to thank him later. Profusely.

"_Hringrs_," The Elder muttered to them. Rings. They reached for the

bands of silver Hiccup had forged; she held his, and he hers. They carefully hung the rings on the hilts of the swords and crossed them over each other. They plucked their ring of the opposite sword and held their hands up for each Viking to see.

She nodded, and they slipped the rings on together.

"Place your hands on the hilt of the swords," The Elder instructed. Hiccup curled his fingers over hers; she clutched back. "Hiccup, Son of Stoick, Dragon-Tamer, Peace-Bringer, speak your vows."

Hiccup swallowed.

His dad was right. This was the hardest. How can he tell her how muchâ€¦?

Toothless's green eyes narrowed at him. Hiccup knew what he was saying.

Be honest.

"Astrid," He said, his voice soft. "My beautiful, wonderful Astrid. You honor me with joining our lives together. I can't promise you only good times; no doubt, we'll fight. The kids will drive us crazy. For some reason, I get the feeling Toothless and you might clash. But I CAN promise I'll always love you. I can promise I'll always take care of you. I can promise to give you a lifetime of happiness. And these promises aren't glass that can easily break; they're like your ring. Silver for brightness, steel for strength? They're bright, and they'll never bend. I forged those rings like I forge these promises. Astrid Hofferson, I love you, and I always will."

He realized he had just given a good speech. Eloquent, even.

Tears poured from Astrid's eyes; she hastily wiped them away. Vikings don't cry.

"Astrid, Daughter of Urgh, proceed in your vows," The Elder intoned.

"Hiccup, I can't believe we're getting married. You say I honor youâ€"you honor me. I know our life won't be perfect; but you're perfect for me. We'll never run short on laughter, or love, and that's all I need. You're all I need. I love you, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock."

"The third," Stoick muttered loudly.

"The third," she agreed.

"You may to kiss your bride," The Elders chanted.

"KISS HER!" Tuffnut roared.

"You're yelling in my ear!" Ruffnut snapped, punching his ear.

"Guys!" Fishlegs admonished.

Hiccup ignored them all. He cautiously pressed his lips to Astrid's

before she pushed against him and deepened it.

The catcalls increased in volume. "Okay, we have to go to the feast eventually," Snoutlout called. They separated, both scowling at the interruption. Toothless roared happily. "He approves," Hiccup translated for Astrid.

"Good, 'cause I'm not going anywhere." Astrid declared.

He wouldn't have that any other way.

Whew, procrasination means there's a lot of these. But I'll answer them all!

disneyisbeautiful: They DO! All that stuff in the last chapter? I made none of it up, at all. I hope you find this crop of weird traditions entertaining too!

Beastial Moon: Yep, my family's that way too.

Voldyne: Thank you! And nope, she doesn't...she's got Hiccup :)

JustBlossom: Thanks! I hope you like this chapter too.

xv323: Thank you! Update soon is actuactlly great incentive for me, it makes me buckle down to write, lol.

HunterNite: my faithful reviewer! Thanks for reveiwing again :)

Romance and Musicals: One, love your username. Two, thank you! I want to you love it, and I hope you keep loving it!

Mimisbrunnr: Whoa. I really hope I didn't offend you too much with the grave thing. It isn't grave-robbing; the idea was that the Vikings wanted the ancestral sword from the grave, and the digging into the grave and emerging out of it was symbolic of being a boy and becoming a man through marriage. In some cases, it could be collected from a living relative (complete with the lecture), But I thought the grave digging would be more interesting to readers. I thought my source was reliable, but if this tradition did not occur, please send me a true, correct source and I will make a note. That being said, thank you for your constructive criticism, and "the richness of your fantasy and dialogues" really made me happy.

Jello and the dragon: Amazing? GASP! I'm going to like you, aren't I?

Crazy For Mac-A-Damian Nutz: I hope you enjoy this and future chapters!

Fate Bends. enjoy life: honestyl, i don't know why I'm so obsessed either. Thsi movie is just incredible.

Midnight4568: Thank you! You're one of my favorites right now becasue you've been in my email so much lately!

**Thanks to everyone who added me to story alerts: HeatherLPotter7, a bit of gravity, scyther27, ultraanimefan94, Midnight4568;

Midnight4568, who added me to their author alerts; Midnight4568, shunxalice, Mac-A-Damian Nutz, Starstreaker, Infinite Freedom, and AlexaJohn18 for adding this to their favorite stories; and most especially those who put me on their favorite author: I'm So Lost in Stereo and shunxalice. You guys are all great!**

**Reviews are love ;) And remember, you'll get the wedding feast faster if you review... **

5. A Feast with MORE Strange Traditions

Ach, writer's block : the occupational hazard. It attacked poor Wordwielder, but she prevails against with the long-awaited feast!

"It is time for the feast," The Welder announced. "Traditionally, the bride and groom race to the mead hall on foot; however, considering our groom, the race will be carried out on the bride and groom's dragons!" There was a buzz of excitement; Hiccup and Toothless exchanged grins. "The losing party," the Elder continued, "will be responsible for serving ale to all the guests tonight."

Astrid narrowed her eyes. "I refuse to serve ale."

"Then I suggest you win," Hiccup said evenly.

"I will!"

Hiccup mumbled to Toothless, "In the bag, in the bag." Astrid didn't know how fast they could go. They had never gone full blast for her; she wouldn't have been able to stomach it. Even in their races, they hadn't exerted all their force; it was unnecessary.

Toothless smirked at his rider. Their thoughts were in sync.

Let's show 'em.

"You got it, bud."

Astrid mounted her Nadder; Hiccup buckled himself in, the adrenaline of knowing they were truly going to fly boooming in his blood. Toothless was taut with energy, ready to rocket to the awaiting sky. Felma snorted at the Night Fury as she positioned herself. Astrid patted her back. "Girl," she said, "I really don't want to be pouring ale all night."

"When I say go," Stoick yelled. "Ready...setâ€|GO!"

Hiccup shot off; Astrid followed after, already falling behind.

Hiccup felt like he was rediscovering the sky as the wind cheered around him, whipping his hair into his eyes, as the clouds streaked past, as his heart pounded hotly. He and Toothless were in their element, at their basic form; they were soaring. Hiccup knew he could never give this up. He and Toothless were so tightly intertwined it was difficult to find one thing about him they didn't share, that Toothless didn't influence. He reminded himself: two rides a day, no matter what else was happening. "Promise," he murmured, then said

louder as he spotted the mead hall below and Astrid in the distance behind them: "Down, boy!"

Toothless plummeted; Hiccup maneuvered the tailfin. The Viking insignia on it would eternally flare satisfaction in his heart. They landed as smooth as fresh snow. Hiccup dismounted and patted Toothless. "Good work. Extra cod tonight." He did a quick calculation, realizing they had to have hit 80 miles per hour in speed. The other Vikings arrived from their march as Astrid landed, gritting her teeth; even Felma looked disgruntled at their loss. The Elder gestured, "Our groom is the victor."

"I am SO surprised," Snoutlout said, then looked horrified. "Oh.., Thor! I just used sarcasm! I'm becoming Hiccup! I'm going to lose all my amazing muscles!"

"Hey, but then maybe Astrid will actually talk to you," Ruffnut offered.

Tuffnut cracked up and high-fived his sister.

"That was so insulting!" Hiccup and Astrid yelled in unison. Hiccup grinned at her, and it melted her heart just a little. "Not too mad?"

She shrugged evasively. "I think it's a little early in our marriage to be mad."

"Thank Thor," Hiccup muttered. "I hate when you're mad at me."

"Thank you for volunteering that information," she replied.

He looked at her, groaning. "I just gave you something for blackmail. How I did I fall right into that?"

The Elder nodded. "Let us proceed. Groom?"

Hiccup nodded and launched himself ahead of Astrid, clumsily unsheathing his sword and blocking across the doorway of the hall. She reached the threshold and waited; she had been reviewed in this, even though she didn't like how she had to be all meek and depend on Hiccup. "Lead me," she spoke.

Hiccup re-sheathed the sword, swearing under his breath at its sheer size. He offered his hand, and she took it. He stood behind her, carefully observing each movement of her foot as she stepped over the lip of the doorway. If she stumbled, it would be a terrible omen; theirs would be determined an ill-fated marriage.

She did not fall.

Hiccup sent an elated prayer of thanks to the gods for their blessing. Somehow, he had found their favor. He could only hope the depth his sword sank into the wooden pillar in the mead hall was congruent with that idea.

It was. The sword, when plunged into the wood, sank nearly to the hilt of the blade. "Ah." The Elder's eyes glittered in satisfaction. "Your children carry a legacy of luck upon them." Hiccup smiled,

half-proud and half-bashful.

"But let us not tarry!" Stoick cried. "Let the feast begin!"

Begin it did. Like magic, Viking hands whisked out plate of plate of food and deposited them on tables. Goblets were passed around, unfilled as of now, until the women would go around and fill them because their patron had not won the race. (Well, it wasn't the first time.) Helpful attendants pushed Astrid and Hiccup into a table at the most visible table in the hall, and someone handed Astrid the bottle of the ceremonial mead. She stood; the babbling hall miraculously fell silent. She poured the mead in a goblet, being sure to only half-fill it; one look at Hiccup screamed he was a lightweight when it came to alcohol. She held it to him, and recited: "Ale I bring thee, thou oak-of-battle, with strength blended and brightest honor; 'tis mized with magic and mighty songs, with goodly spells, wish-speeding runes." Hiccup hesitantly took the drink and rose. "To Odin, to Thor: I thank thee for your blessings and my wife and the life ahead." He sipped, and returned the cup to Astrid. "To Freyja!" She cried. She truly did not want to elaborate on Freyja's impact on life; she would choke on the mead. She downed a larger gulp than Hiccup; she was less new to mead, and knew she had fairly good tolerance. She passed back the cup; he sipped, and returned it to her for her drink. They continued until the cup was finished. As Hiccup drank the last, the Vikings burst into uproarious applause. Toothless let loose an enthusiastic tongue of fire; everyone else shrieked and ducked, but Hiccup laughed, and eventually, she joined in.

"And now," The Elder called. "Let us hallow the bride with Thor's Hammer. Hiccup, come forth."

Hiccup swallowed, thinking this would be a bit awkward, and stood. He approached his...bride, and laid his hammer across the lap of her dress. Ugh. His face was probably the color of a Monstrous Nightmare. He opened his mouth, forcing his voice up in volume, and chanted with the Elders: "Bring the hammer the bride to bless: On the maiden's lap lay ye mjolnir; in Vor's name then our wedlock hallow!"

He rose stiffly, avoiding Astrid's eyes; she yanked him back and kissed him. He smiled against her mouth.

How did she always know how to make him feel like he was in Valhalla?

The rest of the day was merry. Vikings whirled around the dance floor; the men wrestled (Stoick beat every opponent he faced); A lot of the teens had joined in on the ever popular flytings, or insult contests. Snoutlout proved especially keen on this activity, but Fishlegs had a surprising skill at it. "You should get into that," Astrid whispered to Hiccup, poking his ribs. He shook his head, gesturing to where Gobber was entertaining an audience with a "lying story." "I'm enjoying this," he said. "Gobber's pretty good at stories. He told me some when I started working at the forge. Probably made those up too. I was a little hyperactive, and they were one way to keep me focused."

Astrid snorted. "Our kids better not inherit that, or you will be watching them," she threatened. Hiccup avoided her gaze. "Kids," he repeated. "You know, I didn't realize how much of the wedding was about, um, fertility."

"I know," Astrid groaned. "I feel like if I don't get pregnant soon, I'll be exiled or something."

Hiccup squeezed her hand. "Maybe we should just not worry about it? Let nature take its course?" His cheeks pinked as he said it. _He's so endearing, _Astrid thought, chiding herself before realizing that they were married and it was okay to love her husband and be frank about it. So she said that. "I love you."

"I love you." He leaned forward and pressed his lips to hers.

Ruffnut whistled as she bounced up. "Newlyweds," she teased. "Hey, Hiccup, you got any friends you recommend for a single girl who's sick of sharing a room with her brother?"

Hiccup hesitated. "Well?"

"Well?" she prodded.

"You know, Fishlegs is single," he said.

Ruffnut raised her eyebrows. "Hmm. Better than Snoutlout." She flounced off.

"Does that mean she'll try him?" Hiccup asked. "I mean, he sort of likes her. Sort of."

Astrid smiled; in other words, he loved her and made Hiccup swear to keep it quiet. "Hey," she murmured. "You want to go somewhere?"

"Some Astrid-Hiccup bonding time?"

"Yep," she whispered.

"Absolutely."

They snuck out as the dusk began to fall. The stars were shyly slipping into the sky. Hiccup, as cautiously as ever, draped his arm around her. "So."

"So."

"We're married." He sounded awed.

"Yep," she agreed. "What, already regretting it?"

"Never," he swore, lowly, earnestly.

"Good." She snuggled under his arm.

They stood in silence for a time, the only noises being the slap of the waves against the rocks and their own breathing. "I hope you like the house," Hiccup said at last.

"The house?"

"You thought we'd be living with _my father?_" Hiccup grimaced. "That would beâ€!"

"Awkward," she supplied. "So, if not with your dadâ€|where _are_ we living?"

He smirked. "Surprise."

She swatted his arm. "I hate surprises, and you know it."

"You'll find out soon enouâ€""

"Astrid! Hiccup! Whereâ€"" Ruffnut rounded the corner. She smirked. "So this is what I have to look forward to when I get married."

"Interruptions? Absolutely," Hiccup agreed.

"Never get a moment of privacy," Astrid complained.

"Oh, you'll have plenty of that tonight."

They both turned profusely scarlet.

'That's why they sent me. Astrid, we're leading you to the matrimonialâ€|whatever the hell you call it, your house. Hiccup's coming in a bit."

Hiccup's eyes met hers. They were panicked, trying to remain calm; he swallowed, and smiled tremulously. "I'll see you in a bit, then."

She only nodded. Ruffnut, tired of waiting for her release his hand, yanked her away. "Come on. Hiccup, go in the hall before your father has to fetch you."

He ignored her, watching Astrid be enveloped into a crowd of females and pushed away from him. He'd resent this if he wasn'tâ€|well, worrying about his wedding night. Funny how he hadn't even thought about this, out of fear for the ceremony. He made his way back to the mead hall, numb.

"Ach, there ye are, son! We're gonna give the women a mo' to get Astrid ready and watin', and then we'll march to the house."

Hiccup gargled some attempt at "Okay."

"Help light the torches, Stoick you lazy bum," Gobber yelled. "Jest cause you're chief!"

"I'm comin'!" Toothless lazily lit ten torches with a single puff. Hiccup had to smile.

Hiccup felt like he was about to be chased out of Berk as the men stood, each holding a flickering torch that washed their features with sunset light. The swords didn't help.

But he could tame a Night Fury. He could take on the Green Death. He could learn to walk again. He could write wedding vows. He could get the girl. And he could face tonight. "Let's go," he said. The

attendants assembled to lead him; Toothless lumbered to stand beside him.

They marched solemnly to the stately cottage on the outskirts of Berk, near the forest. While his father had haggled the dowry and _mundr_, Hiccup had been refurbishing the dilapidated residence, unused for a hundred years. It had taken weeks and several minor injuries; but this house would be a beautiful home. He was determined to make it.

The women marched past them as they descended into the house. They nodded; a few smiled encouragingly at him. Hiccup stopped Toothless at the threshold. "You've gotta stay in the stable tonight, bud." Toothless cocked his head in that way that told Hiccup he understood, even if he wasn't thrilled. "We'll ride first thing tomorrow. When the sun's rising, like you like." Toothless purred, and Hiccup grinned at him before Stoick dragged him in the house. The torch illuminated the walls as they approached what would be his and Astrid's bedroom. The procession stopped and he was hauled to the front; Stoick mouthed for him to open the door. He did, with slow caution. Inga sat by her daughter on the bed; when Stoick asked, "Can you verify this is your daughter Astrid?" she replied: "I can. Can you verify this is your son Hiccup?"

"Aye, it is my son. So, remove the bridal crown, and we shall leave you."

He reached tenderly for it and slipped it off; with a smile, they slipped away.

Hiccup stepped closer slowly. "Hi," he said.

"Hi."

"Um." He shuffled towards her. "Do you like the house?"

She rolled her eyes. "Really, you have to ask?"

"You do," he said, his smile spreading.

"I love it," she said simply.

"I love _you_." It was getting easier to say it, like saying what his name was. The most elementary of truths.

"Yeah?" She pulled him by his shirt to her, and kissed him with a fervor he'd never seen from her. "I love you."

It was then he realized there was nothing to fear. She was his; he was hers. No matter what happened, she was his; he was hers. It was that simple, that right.

He kissed her back and stopped thinking.

Yeah, NOT getting into the wedding night. This is rated K, guys.

PhoenixWormwood137: Thank you! And IKR? It kind of makes me want to go back in time to a viking wedding...

Midnight4568: Aw, thanks! Gotta say, I loved last chapter.

WisperMoon1999: *bows* here, loyal reader! enjoy!

HunterNite: I hope the feast reminds you of thanksgiving, lol :)

disneyisbeautiful: Fan girls cry AND SO DO AUTHORS! I was tearing up as I typed. Amazing? I LOVE you!

shunxalice: beautifully written? AWWW! And yep, except most dialogue (I had to improvise on that, there's very little records) all my wedding traditions are totally factual. Cool, huh?

Jello and the dragon: I smiled at your review. Thank you!

And thanks to the readers who put me on their story alerts: shunxalice, WisperMoon1999, mylife00, LilRockerStar, Disney Sorceress Kitsune Shinigami99, DEDEBUG9, shashing death, Blood Dragon XIII Thomas1989; Favorite story: shunxalice, Midnight4568, WisperMoon1999, mylife00, Sandra m potter, and Griff Dawg; and their favorite author especially: Midnight4568 and Laugh14.

6. Morning Gift

WHOA, actually on time here! I'm proud of myself ^.^

Hiccup watched her sleep. There was an hour, perhaps, before the sun rose and he had a promise to keep; but for now he could just breathe in sync with her. Astrid was always brimming with energy, barely contained; his heart glowed with the thought that now, as she appeared truly at peace, he loved her even more than before.

He absently combed through her hair, golden like wheat ripened by the sun. Her eyes flickered with dreaming. That would be important later; his stomach tensed with the thought that her dream foretold their lives.

Each moment seemed to last eternally, yet the hour slipped by so very first pink-orange rays of sun streamed through the window and he knew Toothless was ready and waiting. He moved slowly, to not awake his bride. He untangled his legs from hers, tugged his arm from underneath her and edged his weight off the mattress. He dressed as quietly as he possibly could, trying not to drop anything... like usual. He was well pleased to have succeeded; still, he almost crawled back into bed with one look at her. It took one of Toothless' growls from outside to get him moving again.

* * *

><p>Toothless crooned to the sky as they flew; Hiccup could feel his satisfaction at the kept promise. "Thought I'd forget you, bud?"
Toothless rolled his eyes. Yeah, right. They dove through a cloud, effectively soaking them both in half-frozen droplets. Hiccup groaned. "Thank you for that." Toothless jerked his head upwards, and Hiccup directed them as high as he could before he got light-headed. His laugh dissolved into wind. Toothless chortled back.

They landed as the colors faded from the sky. Hiccup poured enough fish for himself for a week into Toothless' trough. "There ya go. We'll be back soon, okay?" Toothless nodded as he began to chomp on the fish. Hiccup snuck back into the house, shedding his riding gear as he went. Astrid was gazing out the window when he entered. The attendants had dressed her in a lovely green dress and bound her hair in the traditional way for married women; he noticed her headband, that he was so used to, had been switched for a band of metallic brocade; another marriage thing, he guessed.

She turned to him, a strange look on her face; not unhappy, nor angry; more accepting.

"We're going to have a lot of kids," she said.

* * *

><p>Once more, the Vikings assembled. (There was a lot more a hung-over ones this time.)</p>

"Tell us the dream," The Elder requested.

Astrid fiddled with her dress's sleeve. "Hiccup and I were riding on Toothless."

"What time was it?"

"Early morning; just past sunrise."

"Continue."

"We flew for a while, and then we landed at our house. Hiccup carried me through the door."

"Hm."

"Then Toothless came in, and there were baby Night Furies following after him."

Hiccup got a terrible urge to laugh.

"Hiccup picked one up and it changed into a baby."

"What did it look like?"

"It had light hair in a tuft. Kind of skinny," she smiled. "Green eyes." Her eyes twinkled at Hiccup. "Then the others changed too."

"How many were there?"

"Five."

"Including the first child?"

"Yes."

"I see."

"And Hiccup started laughing; and Toothless; and then I did. That was

the end."

The Elder nodded, and turned to the Vikings. "The bride's dream has foretold a happy, warm home, and a future of many children. Amen!"

"Amen!" They echoed.

"And now, let's let the marriage between Hiccup Haddock and Astrid Hofferson be finalized with the morning-gift. Hiccup?"

He hated the idea of this. Astrid was not as thing to be bought; but money was to be paid to her as a tribute, as a beginning to her managing the finances. So he produced a bag of golden coins, bowed and gave it to her.

"And now I give thee the keys of our home as my wife and head of our home," he said, fishing out of his pocket a ring of keys. He leaned to her and pointed to each key, "To the doorâ€|the stableâ€|my inventing trunk, if you ever feel curiousâ€| the smithy, but don't tell Gobberâ€|"

She closed her fingers over the keys.

"And now," the Elder announced. "Astrid and Hiccup Haddock!"

The cheer rang louder than any dragon roar, even Toothless's.

And there's only the epilogue left! To the fabulous:

Crazy For Mac-A-Damian-Nutz: Thank you! Well, as you can see, not the endâ€|but the next chapter is.

mks12 98: thank you!

Phil-The-Pyschic-Guy: Yeah, no lemon. It's not my style. But thanks!

Punzie the Platypus (formerly disneyisbeautiful): Yesyes! And IKR? If I tried to write lemon I'd laugh hysterically or vomit. Thanks! Next chapter is last.

DKing2020: IDK why it did that; Chapter 5 was up. I'm sorry, and I hope you can see it now.

And thanks to everyone who added me their author alerts: Annabeth the Unicorn, mylife00, and MWA220; their story alerts: peaceloveandsmiles; their favorite story: WishingNova; and most especially favorite author: Samantha Spanner. Love you guys!

7. Epilogue

Epilogue...will be short and sweet :)

"Honey?" They were lying in their bed, just being with each other.

She loved when he called her endearments. She dived into his chest, edging under his arm. Yes, Astrid Hofferson loved to snuggle. It's

not what most people would have expected, but Hiccup loved it. He was a little fond of snuggling himself.

"Hmm?" she said into his chest. It sort of tickled. He had to force himself to think straight, to not grab her and kiss her as long as he could before he had to breathe. "You know, this is our week anniversary."

"Hmm, it is," she murmured, her legs rubbing against his ankles.

"And, um, not to ruin the moment, but Toothlessâ€|"

She was breathing in his ear and he couldn't focus. Her hair tickled his neck. "Toothless wants back in!" he blurted out. There. "He's kind of having separation anxiety, y'know. It's been a whole week. And he hates sleeping outside."

Astrid ran her hand up and down his arm. He tried to concentrate. Toothless was already feeling neglected, he couldn't kick him out for another week. He is a Viking! He can handle his wife!

Turns out he didn't have to.

Toothless crashed through their window, throwing glass everywhere. Hiccup groaned. "Toothless, do you know how long it took to put those panes in?" Toothless huffed, growled, and curled up on the end of the bed. You took too long.

Hiccup smiled and started scratching his jaw. Astrid rolled her eyes and resettled under his arm. "You know, we're going to have an issue if our kids ever have nightmares. There is no way anyone else can fit on this bed."

A Terror fluttered through the broken window and settled on Astrid's side.

"I stand corrected."

**End Notes: 43 pages on Microsoft and 53 reviews... the response to this has been phenominal. Thank you all! I really enjoyed writing this: laughing, crying, having writer's block and all! I'll always remember how this gave me my first review. **

And so ends this tale.

~Wordwielder

End
file.